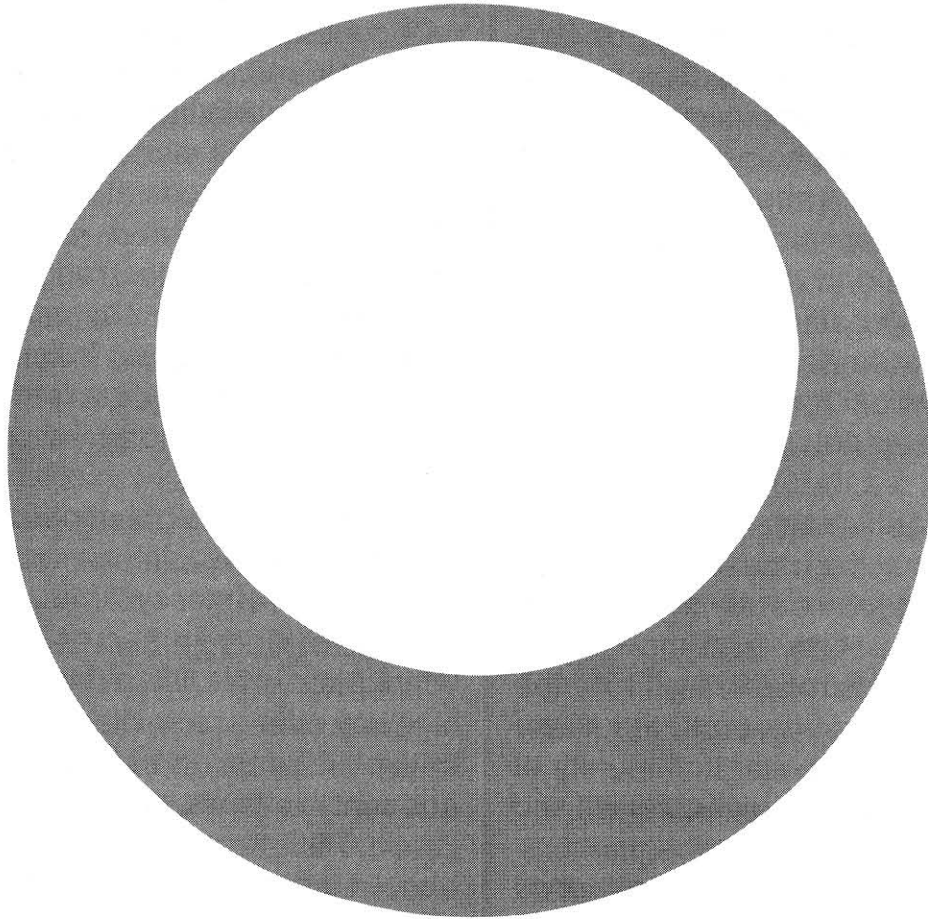


# History of the **INPERIUM**



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## A CONCISE HISTORY OF THE VILANI PERIOD (-100,000 TO -2204)

The Vilani name for their Imperium was *Ziru Sirka*—the Grand Empire of Stars. They were able to create their great empire for one basic reason: They reached the stars first.

### Early History

The Vilani first explored space in about 5500 BC. They ventured out into their own star system (from their homeworld, Vland) in a region of space about 300 parsecs closer to the galactic core than Terra. They visited every world in their system, colonized a few, and put scientific bases on the rest over a period of about a century. By 5300 BC, the Vilani had reached a point culturally and technologically where they were ready to reach for the stars. They launched sublight interstellar colonization missions aimed at the nearest stars. Tauri, a mere 2.17 light-years away, was the first system visited, but several more were explored in rapid succession. Over the course of the next 500 years, the Vilani created a small interstellar community of six systems, each with its own colonies and scientific stations.

The first Vilani contact with intelligence took place in 4789 BC when an expedition to Tahaver discovered a race of aquatic mantas with a nontechnological culture. The mantas, although intelligent, were easily dominated by the Vilani, and over several hundred years became a servant (some say slave) race, being assigned to fish herding and kelp gathering in Tahaver's vast seas. This first contact with an intelligent race set the tone for future contacts between the Vilani and other intelligent beings: The Vilani seemed naturally suited to rule and to exploit others.

The dramatic key to the expansion of the

Vilani was their discovery of the jump drive in about 4714 BC. A research team working on the outer fringes of the Vland system created the first working prototype and demonstrated its effects with a harrowing jump to the nearby Tauri system. The Vilani now had the key to interstellar travel.

### Jump Drive

Of course, luck also had a hand in the future of Vland. The elementary jump drive which the Vilani discovered was capable of transporting a starship across the vast interstellar distances at a speed of about 170 times light speed—a full parsec in about a week. But the range of the jump drive (at least the elementary jump-1 drive which they discovered) is limited to about one parsec. Since the average distance between stars is more like two parsecs, ships were greatly restricted as to which stars could be their destinations.

Vland, however, is one world in an immense chain of star systems, each of which lies within one parsec of the next—the Vilani Main. This Vilani Main became the highway over which Vilani ships travelled. Within 10 years, starships had been built and sent to every system within 20 parsecs. By 4400 BC, the Vilani sphere had reached about 10 parsecs in diameter.

### Exploration and Exploitation

Between 4400 and 1400 BC, the Vilani explored, exploited, and settled virtually every world they contacted. Initially, their emphasis was on exploration and contact, but over the centuries, Vilani settlement inexorably followed. Worlds closest to Vland were settled first, but the star catalogs were bulging with worlds ripe for colonization and exploitation. Barren worlds were exploited for immediate gain; their resources were strip mined and shipped off to feed Vland's growing industries.

Inhabited worlds were exploited as well, but on a more subtle basis. Exploration revealed a number of technologically primitive races on worlds within 60 parsecs. None had developed interstellar travel; few had advanced even beyond the Iron Age. All were ripe for domination by the Vilani.

The Vilani imposed their culture, their law, and their interstellar economic community on all the worlds they encountered. The subject races made few objections; the rewards were far too great when compared to the sacrifices they were called upon to make. Vilani help (or interference) gradually brought the subject races to a high technology level. The Vilani culture had no concept of a "prime directive" banning interference with local cultures. Instead, Vilani culture and technology were handed out wholesale to bring the many non-Vilani races forward. Early Vilani conquests were not military; they were more subtle exercises in economic subjugation.

### **The Coming of the Bureaux**

This 3000-year period of exploration and exploitation was perhaps the most vital in Vilani history. But an empire more than 60 parsecs across is difficult for any government to rule. By 1480 BC, a starship took more than 60 weeks to cross Vilani territory from border to border. It was impossible for the careful, constant control that the Vilani believed in to be exercised across such vast distances. Over the course of several decades, the Vilani homeworld government established three subordinate governments—the Bureaux—which were each assigned a portion of the overall territory to govern, defend, and exploit. Makhidkarun controlled the territory in the direction of the galactic core. Naasirka received territories nearer to Vland. And Sharurshid, controlled by interstellar merchants, was assigned territories in the

direction of the galactic rim.

Each Bureau was a complete interstellar government operated for a profit, but responsible for the welfare of its citizens, control of its subjects, and defense of its territory. Each Bureau had rights of taxation, defense, and legislation in its territory. A Bureau's fleets protected its shipping and trade; its armies defended its installations and conquered new worlds if necessary. Mutual assistance agreements allowed the Bureaux to call upon each other for help. But while each Bureau was a self-sufficient government controlling vast numbers of worlds, all three were nominally responsible to a central ruling council on Vland, the Igsiirdi.

The Igsiirdi ruled Vland. It received tribute (or taxation) payments from the Bureaux and used the funds to administer public works on Vland. It also allocated newly discovered territories to the Bureaux. The three Bureaux appointed the Igsiirdi's members, and in practice, it served as a forum within which the Bureaux could communicate, interact, and eventually reach decisions governing them all.

### **The Consolidation Wars**

Although Vilani territory was 60 parsecs in diameter in 1480 BC, Vilani influence was felt far beyond their established borders. Cultures on the fringes of the Vilani sphere received the benefits of Vilani technology without being subjected to Vilani government. Many such cultures acquired jump drive technology and explored territories even farther beyond the limits of Vilani exploration. It was inevitable that clashes would occur between the Vilani and these independent cultures.

In 909 BC, the Vilani discovered jump-2 and could travel directly to worlds two parsecs distant. Moreover, because of accidents of stellar placement, many jump-2

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routes took significantly less than half the time to run than comparable jump-1 routes.

Vilani ships after 909 BC had at least twice their previous speed and a vastly enhanced strategic mobility. The Vilani kept the jump-2 drive a jealously guarded secret for millennia: The drive immediately gave the Vilani the weapon they needed to keep the rest of the universe under control. In 880 BC, after several centuries of sputtering conflict, the Igsiirdi (expressing the will of the Bureaux) launched the Consolidation Wars and committed all of Vland's forces to subjugating the many states on the fringes of the Vilani Empire. When the wars ended in 476 AD, the Vilani had almost tripled the size of their domain.

Consolidation brought a marked change in the texture of Vilani society. Before, it had stressed peaceful expansion as neighboring worlds were assimilated in a trade community and absorbed into Vilani society. Now, armed might and superior technology were used to force any and every neighboring culture into the fold. Over the next 1000 years, the Vilani conquered all of civilized space and absorbed enemies, allies, and neutrals alike. The Vilani jump-2 advantage virtually assured their ultimate victory in the Consolidation Wars.

The Igsiirdi directed the course of the Consolidation Wars. The Vilani Bureaux faced small interstellar states, but each Bureau had a separate military. The Igsiirdi arranged coordination, shared the burden equitably, and prevented over-expansion. The Igsiirdi also allocated conquered territory to the Bureaux. Territory was not allocated to a Bureau upon its discovery. Instead, it was assigned to a governing Bureau once conquered, although the Bureaux generally agreed before the fact how such territories would be distributed.

The Igsiirdi managed the absorption of conquered states. Interstellar states con-

tinued to exist as subject states. They were absorbed into Vilani society as much as possible. Races that were unable to fit into Vilani society were severely restricted.

## The Grand Empire of Stars

Vland extensively colonized between 700 BC and 521 AD. The last Consolidation War ended in 476 AD. Vland had expanded until no uncolonized civilized states remained on its borders. Beyond those borders were only uncivilized worlds and empty systems. In 476 AD, the Igsiirdi declared the Ziru Sirka. The Vilani calendar dates from this point. The peace imposed by this Imperium lasted for nearly 1200 years, but the cost to the Vilani and to their subject races was immeasurable. The Ziru Sirka initially had no emperor. Within 10 years, the chairman of the Igsiirdi (elected for life by the council) was the *ishimkarun*—the shadow emperor—an unidentified leader who accepted or rejected the decisions of the council. The *ishimkarun* ruled through published proclamations, never appearing in public. Upon his death, the Igsiirdi elected a successor from its members.

With cultural maturity, the Ziru Sirka reached a pinnacle of interstellar diplomacy. Client states under Vilani protection or patronage numbered in the thousands. This stability led to raised world tech levels, living standards, and trade levels. At its height (1000 AD), the First Imperium contained over 15,000 worlds (worlds garnered from absorbed conquered states, settled regions which graduated from "territorial" to "sector government" status, and continued colonization of explored space).

## Stagnation

Vilani culture achieved stability at the cost of stagnation. Maintaining centralized control over this vast expanse created a cultural rigidity. The three Bureaux became



increasingly identical. The old Vilani culture which developed during the First Imperium adhered to a rigid caste structure. Hereditary positions became commonplace in all three Bureaux. Each citizen had a specific and set place in the universe, and it was each citizen's duty to remain in that place. Society could not afford to let individuals do as they pleased.

The Ziru Sirka began a long decline about 1500 AD. The many subject races of the Imperium grew restive, impatient with the imposed culture the Vilani insisted upon. Imperial power was waning and stretched thin, and the Ziru Sirka could no longer afford to absorb new interstellar states. The Imperium had been safe as long as no exterior threat arose. But now, despite all efforts, technology had leaked across the borders to aid new interstellar states developing outside of Vilani control. Many threats pushed at many different places along the border. Some detached small portions of the Imperium; Imperial reactions crushed others.

### **The Crumbling Empire**

About 1800 AD, it was clear even to insiders that the rigid Vilani culture was, in reality, brittle. The young governments took larger and larger chunks of territory, often with the open acceptance of the local citizenry. The texture of Vilani culture was decaying. Officials in the fringe territories began to fabricate their reports rather than reveal the truth to their superiors. Appeals for help or support cost heavily in personal power, so officials simply reported success. Meanwhile, local governors took to hiring and equipping "barbarians" from outside the Imperium for personal power plays. Civil wars, mutinies, and insurrections became increasingly common.

The Imperium used diplomacy to play off enemies against one another where it

could. But there was still substantial territorial shrinkage over the centuries, and it gradually lost territory along its coreward and trailing marches. A movement away from the established, civilized territories started as the Ziru Sirka began to fail.

About 2100 AD, the wolf-like barbarian Vargr began pillaging the Imperium's civilized territories in the direction of the galactic core. Between then and 2800 AD, Vargr fleets were a significant factor in the Imperial retreat out of coreward territories. Other border territories were in revolt, and even some interior territories were becoming unruly in their demands for self-government and less rigid controls from above.

It was against this background of a decaying empire that the first Imperial contact with Terra took place. In 2113 AD, Terran explorers encountered the Vilani at Barnard's Star. The Terrans were understandably surprised to learn that someone else already owned the stars. The Imperium, on the other hand, dismissed the Terrans as simply another barbarian race of little consequence.

### **ARRIVAL OF THE TERRANS**

Terrans, during this period of vast interstellar colonization, were pursuing their own history while confined to their home world. It was not until the 1960s that Terrans ventured into space, and not until 2000 that they were actually exploring space on a permanent basis. The Terran Confederation dates as a centralized world government to the signing of the Treaty of New York in 2022 (although it was not officially called that for another century). This treaty allowed the placement of the armed forces of the major nations of Terra under the centralized control of the United Nations (until then, a loose organization of nation-states, with no governmental authority).

In 2090, Terrans invented the jump drive.

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Initially, it was used only within the solar system: Since the range of a jump-1 drive was insufficient to reach the nearest stars, it was used only for intrasystem jumps. Terrans remained restricted to the solar system for 43 years, and this long incubation period worked in their favor. They developed an extensive variety of jump-capable ships and had produced them for decades when they finally ventured to a neighboring star system.

## Meeting the Vilani

An expedition placed intermediate refueling supplies and travelled to a nearby system, Barnard's Star, early in 2113. It encountered a Vilani mining outpost there. The tales its members heard of the Imperium's size staggered them. Joint international expeditions met with the Vilani and explored nearby systems. It came as a shock to the Terrans that most of the worlds beyond a few parsecs away were already claimed. More than a dozen human races had already colonized the worlds around Earth. A quick effort was made to settle Barnard's Star even as Vilani prospectors were working on that world. Individual nations built starships and expanded their armed forces. Outposts were quickly reinforced and strengthened.

## Interstellar War

The first interstellar war between the Imperium and the Terran Confederation began when a Vilani trade caravan ignored Terran traffic control signals. Fortunately for the Terrans, the Vilani scarcely knew that a war was going on, as the UN exercised only tenuous control over the several national squadrons. This war, considered a Terran victory, began the period of Terran ascendance and led to strengthening of the central Terran government.

In 2123, representatives from the Terran

colonies were admitted to the General Assembly. The Terran government then changed its name to "The Terran Confederation."

The peace that concluded the first war was both uneasy and short. The second through seventh wars were marked by see-saw exchanges of territory, mostly confined to the Dingir and Sol subsectors. The Terrans applied every force they could bring to bear on their enemy. (For example, in 2132 the Terran Navy began purchasing robots, mainly heavy-duty construction types for making temporary structures used as advance bases.) The Terrans believed that their successes in gradually expanding their territory were entirely of their own making. After winning the first three wars, they finally realized the Grand Imperium's immensity. They also realized that they could win in spite of that size.

Other problems than the Terrans preoccupied the Vilani central government. Vilani power, even at this late date, was sufficient to crush the Terrans had it been applied. But the Vilani fought these initial wars with only the forces available to the affected provincial governor. He was charged to win wars and maintain the empire's power on a limited budget. Appeals to the emperor were avoided because they cost heavily in personal power. The local governors often compromised, agreed to some territorial concessions, and then reported victory.

## A Major Victory

The eighth interstellar war finally broke open the frontier and ended in the first major Terran victory. After the capture of Dingir, Terran Grand Admiral Manuel Albadawi exploited Vilani confusion by reaching beyond Dingir to seize and fortify other worlds of the Imperium. The Treaty of Ensular (which ended the war) ceded all of the Imperium rimward of Vega to the

Terrans. This series of interstellar wars ended when the Grand Imperium collapsed, as much from its own weight, age, and decadence as from the Terran victories. It collapsed when its leaders lost the support of the people and the will to resist.

### **Terran Occupation**

The Terrans moved quickly to occupy the remaining Vilani territory. Many Vilani subject races, such as the Vegans, welcomed the Terrans. Terran naval officers were dispatched throughout the Grand Imperium. Between 2302 and 2317, over 100,000 naval officers were sent to take control of the reins of government, direct local bureaucracies, and maintain peace and order. The Terran officers carried their technology with them, including robots. Terran naval officers occupied key posts in the Vilani bureaucracy, which was otherwise retained intact. In some cases, Terran ensigns administered whole worlds, and mere commanders ruled whole sub-sectors. Vilani military forces were incorporated into the Terran forces.

The conquered territories were under military rule from 2302 to 2317. During this period, the Terran Navy learned to deal effectively with the Vilani and to be sympathetic to the Vilani people. That the Vilani openly accepted the Terrans made it easier to view them as friends deserving of respect and protection. The Terrans had to administer an immense empire that had already admitted it could not do the job itself. If the bureaucracy had collapsed (and trade ceased), hundreds of worlds would have died as supplies were cut off.

### **The Rule of Man**

In 2317, the Terran Secretariat voted to transfer control of the conquered territories directly to Terra and to incorporate the Grand Imperium into the Terran Confedera-

tion. Such a move would have made every Terran a millionaire, but at an untold cost to the citizens of the Imperium. Admiral Hiroshi Estigarribia, the commander-in-chief of the Terran Navy, realized that the Confederation government could not possibly control the vast territories of the Imperium. He proclaimed himself regent of the Vilani Imperium and protector of Terra, with both states now united in the Rule of Man. Nearly all of the fleet sided with Estigarribia because it was composed mainly of colonials (who were under-represented in the Terran Confederation government) and because of his careful preparation.

The Confederation was dissolved without significant resistance. Terran fleet headquarters at Dingir became the capital of the Rule of Man. The bureaucracy remained centered on Vland, although arrangements were made to gradually transfer it elsewhere. Upon Estigarribia's death, his chief of staff succeeded him and crowned himself Emperor Hiroshi II. Estigarribia did not actually assume the crown, but his government is known as that of Emperor Hiroshi I. Hiroshi II transferred all government functions from Dingir and Vland to a more centrally located world, renamed bilingually Hub/Ershur.

### **The Fall of Night**

This world remained the capital of the Rule of Man for the next 400 years. Unfortunately, Terran rule was no more enlightened or progressive than that of the Vilani. From a tight, paternalistic economic empire, the pendulum swung to a disjointed military empire. Neither was really tenable over such a large domain. The drift toward disintegration was too strongly rooted in the fabric of the Ziru Sirka. All too soon the Long Night, the inevitable result of centuries of oppressive rule, descended over the stars which had been the Ziru Sirka.



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